

Frequently Asked Questions

By Mattie Mendoza and Phil Lockwood

Q: I have coordinated basic EMT courses for years, but I have never been able to clearly explain to my students the details of how the certification/licensing process works or why it takes the length of time it does. Can you give me a quick run-down?

A: Processing times vary according to special circumstances (e.g., our recent transition to a new computer system, application volume, deficient applications and criminal history administrative review), but there are a few constants:

- **Mail – Six days** (at least three business days each way, on average).
- **Money – Three to 10 business days.** All applications first go to the department's fiscal processing office, which is in a different building than the Office of EMS/Trauma Systems Coordination. Staff there open envelopes and process all money received before forwarding applications to us. For electronically submitted applications, the fee is processed electronically.
- **Application processing – Five to 10 business days.** This includes running the criminal history background check; data entry; ensuring all documentation is accounted for and correct; and printing the certificates.

As you can see, the certification/licensing process can take up to **26 business days**, or about five weeks, from the time you submit your application until you receive your certificate or license. Applying online can shorten this time frame, as it eliminates mailing and the fee is processed quickly, so we encourage electronic submission. **Note that our office controls only five to 10 days of the whole process.** The EMS Certification unit processes all certification applications. Out of the eight employees, only two process applications full-time.

The processing time will be extended if your application is subject to an administrative

review based on your criminal history; if an incomplete application is submitted; if your check is returned due to non-sufficient funds; or if we have to wait for your National Registry test scores. For information on NR exams, you will need to contact National Registry. NR's website (www.nremt.org) has lots of information, so you may want to explore it first. Otherwise, contact National Registry by phone at (614) 888-4484.

Q: I tried to check my EMS certification status on your website (at <http://dshsregn.dshs.state.tx.us/ems/certquery.htm>) and it seems to be down. Can you tell me when it will be working again?

A: Effective February 19, 2007, most of EMS went live with a new database system known as RAS. The Certification Query was a live link to our previous database, and connecting it to the new system turned out to be quite a technological challenge. A roster of all certified personnel is now being posted to the website to temporarily replace the Certification Query function. The list is updated twice a week (every Wednesday and Friday morning) until the Certification Query function is linked to our new database and once again operable. Thank you so much for your patience and understanding during this transition period.

Q: I am currently certified in another state. I have been told that to gain certification in Texas I will now have to submit to a federal background check through the FBI. Have the requirements for reciprocity certification in Texas changed?

A: Yes, there are several changes to the rules regarding reciprocity requirements. Effective March 1, 2007, you must submit to an FBI criminal background check to gain reciprocity certification in Texas. You can find all the information, instructions and forms on the FBI's website at: www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm. Also, effective January 1, 2007, every reciprocity applicant who does

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not hold current National Registry must pass the National Registry assessment exam *prior* to the completion of all requirements for certification, per EMS Rule §157.33(i). And, per EMS Rule §157.33(E), a candidate who meets the requirements of this section shall be certified for four years beginning on the date of issuance of a certificate and wallet-size certificate. You must also send an out-of-state verification form to each state you are currently certified in to be completed by that state agency and faxed to us, prior to certification. All of this information and the necessary forms can be found on our website at: www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/stdrecip.shtm.

Q: I was certified in Texas as an EMT-B a long time ago, but I didn't renew my certification. I am now a LVN in Texas. Can I challenge the test to get recertified as an EMT-B or EMT-I?

A: EMS rules allow a candidate who is certified or licensed in another health care discipline, or who has completed training outside the United States, to gain Texas EMS certification or licensure. You should contact a DSHS-approved post-secondary educational institution (college or university) to review your education and experience and determine its equivalency to its EMS program curriculum. You will be responsible for complying with its policies and procedures for awarding credit by transfer or advanced placement. Contact your local EMS field office (www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/regions.shtm) for a list of approved educational institutions. Also see <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/formsresources.shtm> for a statewide list of approved EMS education programs. Passing the National Registry exam also is a state requirement.

Q: As part of my NREMT registration renewal, I'm supposed to complete a

refresher course. Texas training programs don't seem to have any state-approved refresher courses. Why is that?

A: We don't recognize refresher courses, per se, so your best bet is probably a "recertification" course, if you can find one (they're sparse). We approve initial, remedial and recertification courses. Remedial courses are designed to retrain those who fail to pass the initial exam in the first three attempts. The recertification course was designed to address a wide variety of subject areas required for Option 4 of the recertification process, but it's more hours than the standard NREMT refresher. See appendix K and L of the EMS Education and Training Manual (www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/EducTrainManual.PDF) to compare the hour and subject area requirements of each to compare with NREMT requirements. If you're a student looking for one of these courses, call an education program director or course coordinator. They may already have the course approved as remedial or recertification or can get approval for it.

Q: How do I determine if a particular CE provider is state approved?

A: The program should be able to provide you with verification of current department approval and a valid CE course number. We also recognize CE providers that are approved by other accrediting agencies. See a list of these on our website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/sotherce.shtm. Some national standardized courses (i.e., ACLS, BTLIS, etc.) also are accepted. See the breakdown of CE credit awarded for those courses at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/ceapprov2002.pdf. As you may have heard, we are retooling the certification query and switching to a new license database. One new feature allows us to search for approved CE and education programs, licensed EMS providers and first responders.

A clarification of a FAQ item printed in the March/April issue of Texas EMS Magazine: For classes required every two years (i.e., CPR, ACLS, etc.), you may count them only twice during your four-year certification period, per EMS Rule §157.38.